

American

NEWS & VIEWS

A Daily Newsletter from Public Affairs, American Embassy

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Presidential Proclamation on World Freedom Day 2011

THE WHITE HOUSE
Office of the Press Secretary
November 8, 2011

WORLD FREEDOM DAY, 2011

BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

A PROCLAMATION

On November 9, 1989, the German people broke through a barrier that divided their nation, demonstrating no wall is strong enough to hold back the rising tide of human liberty. There could be no clearer rebuke of tyranny, nor a stronger affirmation of freedom. On World Freedom Day, we commemorate the fall of the Berlin Wall, celebrate the resilience of the human spirit, and stand with all those who live in the darkness of oppression and believe in the hope of a brighter day.

This pivotal moment in the global march toward liberty heralded a new era in Europe and around the world. Today, we once again find ourselves at a crossroads of history as a wave of democratic movements sweeps away oppressive dictatorships in the Middle East and North Africa.

Just as the United States supported the aspirations of those who emerged from behind the Iron Curtain, we continue to stand with all who seek their universal rights and reach for a future that offers dignity, justice, equality, personal freedom, and greater economic opportunity. Recent developments in the Middle East and North Africa remind us that the pursuit of liberty endures. As people around the world embrace the cause of human freedom, they take steps toward a more stable and prosperous future.

Today, we pay tribute to the brave individuals who, despite all risks, tear down barriers that obstruct democracy and justice for all. Let us keep in our thoughts those who still live under totalitarian regimes, and let us honor their courage to hold fast to the promise of a better future. On World Freedom Day, we renew our commitment to all who believe -- even in the face of cynicism, doubt, and oppression -- that walls truly can come down.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, BARACK OBAMA, President of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and the laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim November 9, 2011, as

World Freedom Day. I call upon the people of the United States to observe this day with appropriate ceremonies and activities, reaffirming our dedication to freedom and democracy.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this eighth day of November, in the year of our Lord two thousand eleven, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and thirty-sixth.

BARACK OBAMA

President Obama, NATO Chief Discuss Libya, Afghanistan

By Merle David Kellerhals Jr. | Staff Writer

Washington — President Obama and NATO Secretary-General Anders Fogh Rasmussen met November 7 to discuss NATO's just-ended mission to support Libya and to discuss goals for the 2012 Chicago summit, which will feature discussions on Afghanistan.

A significant part of their meeting in the Oval Office was focused on NATO's defense capabilities to meet future security threats, which is expected to be a dominant theme at the next summit, the White House said in a prepared statement. Obama is hosting the 25th NATO summit May 20-21 in Chicago. The 2010 summit was held in Lisbon November 19-20.

"They agreed that the Chicago Summit should seek to further broaden and deepen NATO's relationships with non-NATO partner nations," the statement said.

"Additionally, the president and secretary-general discussed the important progress made by the NATO-led ISAF mission in Afghanistan," the White House said. ISAF is the multinational International Security Assistance Force that is providing training, security and humanitarian assistance throughout Afghanistan.

Obama and Rasmussen also discussed how the Chicago summit might shape the next major phase of transition in Afghanistan, the statement said.

In a White House speech June 22, Obama said he had ordered the gradual withdrawal of approximately 33,000 U.S. troops from Afghanistan beginning in July as part of a larger process to withdraw U.S. forces as Afghan national security forces assume greater responsibility for the nation's security by 2014. Throughout the process, though, Obama has stressed that the withdrawal of forces will be influenced by actual security conditions in Afghanistan.

"After this initial reduction, our troops will continue coming home at a steady pace as Afghan security forces

move into the lead. Our mission will change from combat to support," Obama said. "By 2014, this process of transition will be complete, and the Afghan people will be responsible for their own security."

Obama and Rasmussen's White House meeting occurred one week after NATO's formal seven-month security support mission for Libya ended.

"The president and the secretary-general agreed that by acting quickly and decisively NATO saved the lives of thousands of Libyan civilians," the White House said. The eight-month Libyan revolution brought to an end the 42-year regime of dictator Muammar Qadhafi.

After meeting with Obama at the White House, Rasmussen held closed talks with Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton, Defense Secretary Leon Panetta and National Security Advisor Thomas Donilon at the State Department. Rasmussen was also expected to meet with members of the U.S. Congress.

U.S. Will Strive for AIDS-Free Generation, Secretary Clinton Says

By Charlene Porter | Staff Writer

Washington — U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton announced November 8 that the United States is striving to create an "AIDS-free generation," and is calling on other nations, donors and international organizations to embrace the same goal.

In the 30 years since first identification of the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) as the agent causing Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS), Clinton said, the world has now reached a "historic opportunity" to overcome the disease and the human suffering and social disintegration it causes.

Clinton defined an AIDS-free generation as one where no babies are born infected with their mother's HIV in the womb; no adults risk exposure to the virus because prevention efforts are so thorough; and any person who does contract HIV receives treatment to prevent the development of AIDS.

Speaking at the National Institutes of Health (NIH) in Bethesda, Maryland, one of the world's leading scientific organizations engaged in countering the disease, Clinton said an AIDS-free generation has been "unimaginable" in the past, but is now possible "because of scientific advances largely funded by the United States and new practices put in place by this administration and our many partners."

According to the latest global estimate calculated by the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS

(UNAIDS), about 2.6 million people were newly infected with HIV in 2009, a decline of nearly 500,000 from the number of new infections a decade before. The statistic provides evidence that scientifically proven prevention methods do work.

Clinton said expanding the adoption of those methods will be a critical step toward achieving an AIDS-free generation. The secretary of state named three prevention techniques that have proven their effectiveness:

- Medications to stop mother-to-child transmission (MTCT) of HIV during pregnancy and at birth.
- Male circumcision, shown to correlate with lower HIV prevalence rates for both biologic and social reasons.
- Drug treatment for HIV-positive persons, proven to reduce the virus in the bloodstream and to lower the risk of transmission to a sexual partner.

The United States recently granted \$50 million to several research organizations to develop better data on how prevention strategies can be best applied in different communities and among different populations. Clinton announced November 8 a further \$60 million investment to fund a rapid scale-up of combination prevention strategies in four sub-Saharan African nations.

Clinton's determination to strive for an AIDS-free generation comes several months after the United Nations held a special session on HIV/AIDS, adopting a declaration reaffirming the international community's commitment "to end the epidemic with renewed political will and strong, accountable leadership and to work in meaningful partnership with all stakeholders at all levels to implement bold and decisive actions."

Ending the occurrence of mother-to-child transmission of HIV by 2015 was among the goals set at that June 2011 U.N. General Assembly meeting. After that announcement, the U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) announced an additional \$75 million to invest in MTCT prevention efforts. This funding came on top of the almost \$300 million that PEPFAR provides annually to protect newborns from infection.

PEPFAR was established in 2003 and became the largest commitment to elimination of a global disease ever made by a single nation. The U.S. Congress renewed the program in 2008 with authorization to spend \$48 billion on HIV/AIDS and other disease programs through 2013.

Top officials at UNAIDS welcomed Clinton's announcement. "Leadership from the United States has been vital to the AIDS response to date and will be key to seizing this historic opportunity," said Michel Sidibé, executive director of the Geneva-based organization.

"Secretary Clinton has reaffirmed the United States government's strong commitment to this effort and has described a vision that should inspire us all. I hope that her call will galvanize leadership from around the globe to accelerate efforts to end the AIDS epidemic."

Clinton urged other donor nations and organizations to step up their efforts consistent with these new goals, but she also called on aid-receiving nations to step up their commitment to HIV/AIDS prevention and other domestic health programs. Though she did not name them, Clinton said some countries have been counting on PEPFAR or other donors to provide all the funding for their health programs while they devote national resources to other infrastructure programs. The U.S. secretary of state said that has to stop.

"More countries need to follow the lead of South Africa, Nigeria, Senegal, Rwanda, Zambia and others that are committing larger shares of their own budgets to HIV/AIDS," Clinton said.

The Obama administration's heightened commitment to prevention and treatment of HIV/AIDS and other global health programs comes at a time when U.S. lawmakers and the public are applying intense scrutiny to national spending and budget deficits. Some participants in that ongoing debate say the United States should cut back international development and health assistance as a means of reducing spending. Clinton had a ready answer for that argument.

"When so many people are suffering and we have the means to help them, we have an obligation to do what we can," Clinton said.

Clinton said work against HIV/AIDS must continue to create a brighter future for the world and to further the cause of human progress.

In a related matter, Clinton announced the appointment of comedian and television host Ellen DeGeneres as a special envoy for global AIDS awareness. DeGeneres will use her celebrity platform to reach millions of Americans and raise awareness about the global fight against AIDS, according to a State Department news release.

Energy Innovators to Discuss Solutions at Space Center

By Jane Morse | Staff Writer

Washington — Ten organizations with innovative ideas or products to meet energy challenges have been invited to participate in a forum at the Kennedy Space Center in Florida, where they will discuss their ideas with experts.

The forum is part of a program called Launch, a global

initiative to support innovative work that can contribute to a sustainable future and accelerate solutions to meet urgent challenges facing society.

NASA, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), Department of State and Nike Inc. joined together to form Launch in an effort to identify, showcase and support innovative approaches to global challenges through a series of forums. Launch searches for visionaries whose ideas, technologies or programs show great promise for making tangible impacts on society.

In 2010, Launch held two forums on health and water. This year's forum on energy, to be held November 10-13 at the space center, will focus on systems that are sustainable and accessible to both developed and developing world populations. During the three-day forum, innovators will discuss their proposed energy solutions with Launch council members, who represent the business, investment, international development, policy, engineering, science, communications and sustainability sectors. The sessions are designed to identify challenges and opportunities for the entrepreneurs' innovations and to accelerate them into the world.

"Access to sustainable sources of energy is one of the 21st century's greatest challenges, and this group of innovators stands a real chance of making a significant impact in meeting that challenge," said Alex Dehgan, science and technology adviser to the administrator of USAID. "USAID is committed to supporting visionary ideas in the energy sector. We look forward to working with this remarkable group of people and to playing our part in accelerating their progress."

These organizations and individuals, and their innovations, will be featured at this year's forum:

- Gram Power, Yashraj Khaitan: A micro/mini-grid solution for underserved communities that uses modular battery storage technology, energy management intelligence and a prepayment model.
- Hydrovolts, Burt Hamner: An affordable "Flipwing" turbine that enables reliable hydroelectricity generation from canals and other managed-flow water courses.
- Turbococinas, Rene Nunez Suarez: A revolutionary clean and efficient wood-combustion cookstove.
- Point Source Power, Craig Jacobsen: An economical fuel cell for emerging markets that allows battery charging in cooking pits or fires.
- The Solanterns Initiative, Nina Marsalek, Renewable Energy Ventures: An initiative dedicated to replacing 1 million of Kenya's kerosene lanterns with solar-powered lights.
- Powerzoa, Jamie Simon: A smart system that allows enterprise-level energy managers to automate control of

energy down to the appliance level, stopping power waste.

- Promethean Power Systems, Sorin Grama: A rural refrigeration system for commercial cold-storage applications in off-grid and partially electrified areas of developing countries.
- NIFTE Pump, Mark Bryan, Thermofluidics: A pumping device that uses low-temperature heat to generate fluid motion with very few moving parts.
- Flexible Electrochromic Film, Ashu Misra, ITN Energy Systems: A revolutionary flexible electrochromic film that allows active control of transmitted light and solar heating.
- NanoTune Technologies, Frank Wang: An electrode innovation that produces ultracapacitors with five to seven times greater energy storage capacity than conventional capacitors.

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